



# **SARATOGA VILLAGE PLAN**

**Adopted by City Council**

**May, 1988**

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## SARATOGA VILLAGE PLANNING AREA

Saratoga has unique historical and environmental assets. Shoppers and tourists find streets on which it is possible to stroll. Shops, residences, Saratoga Creek, and tall trees combine to give the area its village atmosphere.

The large-scale and undifferentiated urban development that has obliterated local character in much of the surrounding region has not damaged the quality of the Village. Big Basin Way and the neighboring streets offer an alternative environment both for the community of Saratoga and visitors from the surrounding region, and the commercial and recreational potential of this unique environment has not been fully tapped.

Historically, architectural vestiges of the past have survived to become part of the present. The grist mill, tannery, and raucous saloons are gone, but a number of Queen Anne houses, early California bungalows, 19th century storefronts, and old church buildings remain.

Much of the newer architecture, while eclectic, does not violate the small scale, historical character of the Village. A few of the newer structures are perhaps less successful and point to the need for design criteria and review procedures.

The Village's unique character is fragile and could be lost if the wrong planning and development decisions are made. If more retail facilities are developed with parking in the front rather than to the rear, the pedestrian quality of Big Basin Way would be lost and the street would become just another commercial strip. The razing of old buildings and the development of inappropriate new architecture would destroy the area's visual character. If new pedestrian and parking amenities are not added, the Village may not be able to compete as a specialty shopping and dining area, and the preservation of its unique character becomes uncertain.

In recognition of the special assets and potentials of the Village, the goals of this plan are aimed at:

1. Preserving and enhancing the small-scale, pedestrian character, to make the area more inviting to potential shoppers and diners;
2. Preserving and enhancing the architectural and landscape quality of the area;
3. Improving parking and circulation;
4. Encouraging a traditional town center mix of specialty shops, restaurants, convenience shops, services, and residences; and
5. Conserving historic structures.

The Saratoga Village Plan covers only the Village commercial core. Although the adjacent residential areas may benefit from many of the proposed improvements, the rezonings, design guidelines and parking/circulation programs are intended only for the commercial areas along Big Basin Way, Highway 9 and Saratoga Avenue. Map #1 shows the combined Saratoga Village Plan proposals set forth in this document.

### Policy Basis for the Village Plan

There has been ongoing community interest in and commitment to the development and protection of the Village area for many years. Saratoga's 1974 General Plan contained an adopted Village Design Plan that was developed by a Village Task Force and the planning consulting firm of Williams & Mocine. The Village Merchants Association was organized in 1975, and a second Village Task Force was appointed in 1977 to assess the original plan and suggest changes and implementation possibilities. A sub-committee of the Merchants Association, called the Village Beautification Committee, was formed in 1984. A third Village Task Force was appointed in 1985; it was with the assistance of this group that the Saratoga Village Planning Program was prepared by the planning consulting firm of Mackay & Soms. It is from the Mackay & Soms document, conceptually approved by the City Council in May 1987, that this specific plan was developed.

The policy basis for the Saratoga Village Plan is found in the 1983 General Plan. The Village was designated as Area J, one of the twelve planning areas in the city with specific guidelines for development. Guideline #1 for the Village reads as follows:

"Develop a specific plan for the Village, incorporating the previous Village Design Plan, the Village Task Force Report, and the comments from the report of Area J's General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee."

**CHAPTER II**  
**LAND USE AND ZONING**

## EXISTING LAND USE

Map #2 shows existing land uses in the Village area, with uses divided into four categories:

1. Retail uses (i.e., activities primarily involved with direct sales or personal services to the public);
2. Professional-financial uses (e.g., banks, law offices, realty offices, etc.);
3. Hotel-motel uses; and
4. Public and quasi-public uses (e.g., museum, churches, fire station, post office, Saratoga School, etc.).

Only building uses are represented. Existing parking lots are shown in the Parking section of this plan.

In several instances, existing building uses have been simplified for purposes of graphic representation. A few of the larger arcade buildings, for instance, have both retail and professional-financial uses, and have been graphically represented to approximate the percentages of the structures devoted to each use.

The pattern that emerges from the Existing Land Use map shows the following characteristics:

1. For planning purposes, retail uses are entirely concentrated west of Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road. The only exceptions are a catering service, which does not require street exposure or pedestrian access, on the east side of Saratoga-Los Gatos Road at Oak Street, and a small commercial complex on Neale's Hollow Lane, set well back from Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road.
2. With minor exceptions, non-residential land uses east of Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road are professional-financial or public and quasi-public, that is, non-retail.
3. The two distinct land use areas described in "1" and "2" above are clearly divided, both functionally and visually, by Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road. If retail uses were encouraged to expand east of this major arterial, the following problems could be anticipated:
  - a. Increased numbers of pedestrians trying to cross the arterial, with increased accidents and safety improvement costs;

- b. Increased traffic circulation problems, as more shoppers and diners cross the arterial in their automobiles, looking for destinations or parking facilities;
  - c. Increased need for parking facilities east of the arterial; and
  - d. Loss of some of the cohesiveness and small scale that are now important elements of the Village's pedestrian character.
4. In the heart of the Village (i.e., west of Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road), most of the ground level uses are retail, with the exceptions being professional-financial. The professional-financial uses at street level, while being desirable uses for the community, can interrupt the pedestrian flow that is one of the Village's attractions. Such interruptions can be resolved through encouraging professional-financial uses at second level and interior arcade locations rather than at frontage, ground level locations, and by encouraging more pedestrian interest (e.g., mini-plazas, benches, etc.) in locations where retail continuity is interrupted (see Design Guidelines section).
5. Almost all of the buildings in the heart of the Village directly abut the sidewalks. The only breaks in this almost uninterrupted flow of commercial building frontages (e.g., the large parking lot directly abutting Big Basin Way, wide driveways leading to parking lots, etc.) can be noted on the Existing Land Use map and are very apparent when seen from the street. Ways to avoid any additional breaks in the commercial frontage along Big Basin Way and to eliminate some of the existing ones are discussed in the Zoning, Parking, and Design Guidelines sections of this report.
6. In the core of the Village, west of Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road, the retail area is clearly defined by Saratoga Creek on the north and by residentially zoned and developed land to the south.

## EXISTING ZONING

Map #3 shows the existing zoning pattern in the Village area. Existing zoning regulations and boundaries present several barriers to achieving Village planning goals. These barriers include the following:

1. Zoning Districts Not Specifically Designed for the Pedestrian Oriented Environment of the Village

The existing C-C (Community Commercial) district and C-V (Visitor Commercial) district do not incorporate the design, pedestrian open space, and related requirements that are essential to protecting and enhancing the Village environment. Also, both districts permit parking lots directly abutting Big Basin Way, which would further interrupt pedestrian flow in the Village, both functionally and visually. Although a use permit is currently required for professional and financial establishments, no restraint is placed on the number of such uses occupying ground level, street frontage locations that would preferably be used by retail uses catering directly to foot traffic.

The C-V district requires a minimum rear yard of thirty feet. This requirement is not appropriate to the Village commercial properties on the north side of Big Basin Way, because Saratoga Creek and Wildwood Park act as buffers between commercial development and residences to the north, and because the open space requirements could better be directed to creating landscaped areas accessible to and usable by shoppers and pedestrians.

On the south side of Big Basin Way, commercial properties do abut residential properties, but the 30-foot rear yard requirement and design review procedures could adequately protect the neighboring residences. Similarly, C-V requirements for minimum side yards of ten feet could create dead spaces between commercial buildings that could be better utilized for pedestrian or employee leisure areas.

2. Zoning Districts Permitting Inappropriate Uses

In addition to permitting parking lots directly abutting commercial street frontage, the C-C district lists mortuaries as a permitted use. Mini-storage and auto upholstery facilities are listed as conditional uses in the C-V district. All of these uses would detract from the pedestrian shopping environment of the Village.

Currently, outdoor dining facilities require a conditional use permit in both the C-C and C-V districts, even though this is a desired use. Outdoor dining is the kind of outdoor, pedestrian oriented use that should be encouraged and that can be adequately regulated through design review procedures.

3. Zoning Boundaries Inappropriate to the Actual Development Patterns of the Area

As discussed in the section on Existing Land Use, retail uses in the Village are concentrated west of Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road. If retail development were to expand east of the arterial, the cohesiveness of the Village would be lost, and new problems would be created involving pedestrian crossings, automobile circulation, and parking. At the present time, however, C-C district zoning exists on private properties on the east side of the arterial.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

### GOAL, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION

- 1.0 (Goal) The goal of the Land Use and Zoning section of the Village Plan is to make Village zoning compatible with the overall goals of the plan and to respond to the special needs of the Village commercial core.
- 1.1 (Policy) The City shall create two new Commercial Historic districts (CH-1 and CH-2), with prescribed uses, standards, and review procedures as outlined on the following pages; these districts shall apply to specific areas of the Village commercial area.
- 1.1 (Imp) Hold Village area meetings to discuss proposed land use and zoning policies. Follow established procedures for adopting new ordinance.
- 1.2 (Policy) The Village area shall be rezoned (Map #4) to keep retail activities from expanding east of Saratoga-Los Gatos Road and to reflect the two different commercial intensities within the Village itself.
- 1.2 (Imp) Hold Village area meetings to discuss proposed land use and zoning policies (in conjunction with Implementation 1.1 above) and follow established procedures for rezoning appropriate parcels.

## PROPOSED COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT REGULATIONS

The new Commercial Historic districts should respond to the different commercial needs of the Village core. CH-1 would apply to the more intensely developed commercial area generally located east of 5th Street, where buildings and storefronts abut the sidewalk. CH-2 would apply to the less intense commercial area west of 5th Street, where front yard setbacks and residential structures provide a transition to the adjacent semi-rural and estate areas. The new districts should incorporate the following uses, standards, and review procedures. It should be noted that it is not the intent here to produce the complete ordinance, but rather to indicate the direction and intent.

### 1. Permitted Uses

- a. Retail uses, excluding automobile oriented businesses;
- b. Restaurants, including outdoor dining;
- c. Personal services;
- d. Professional, administrative, medical, and financial services when located either above the ground level or at the ground level if separated from Big Basin Way by another commercial space; and
- e. Residential units when located either above the ground level or at the ground level if separated from Big Basin Way by a commercial space.

### 2. Conditional Uses

- a. Professional, administrative, medical and financial services when located at ground level, street frontage locations;
- b. Theatres;
- c. Service stations on properties abutting Saratoga-Los Gatos/Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road and accessible directly from the arterial;
- d. Parking lots;
- e. Hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast establishments.

3. Use and Design Review Procedure

All developments and renovations necessitating design review or use permits shall require submittal to the Planning Commission of adequate plans, elevations, and supporting data showing the proposed development or renovation, in accordance with established submittal requirements.

4. Development Standards

a. Minimum site area, site frontage, site width, and site depth:

- 1) CH-1 = the same as required in the C-C district.
- 2) CH-2 = the same as required in the C-V district.

b. Structural coverage:

- 1) CH-1 = eighty percent (80%), except that one hundred percent (100%) of the site may be covered if the equivalent open space is provided on a second level and designed so that the open space is visible and accessible to pedestrians on Big Basin Way and from adjacent parking facilities.
- 2) CH-2 = sixty percent (60%), the same as required in the C-V district.

c. Pedestrian open spaces on private property (e.g., miniature plazas, open arcades, atria, etc):

- 1) CH-1 = an area equivalent to twenty percent (20%) of the area of the property, to be located either on the first or second levels.
- 2) CH-2 = an area equivalent to twenty percent (20%) of the covered area of the building(s) on the site.

d. Front yard setbacks:

- 1) CH-1 = none.
- 2) CH-2 = fifteen feet.

e. Side yard setbacks:

None.

f. Rear yard setbacks:

- 1) CH-1 = none.
- 2) CH-2:
  - (a) abutting public rights-of-way, including

Saratoga Creek = none.

- (b) abutting adjacent residential zones = thirty feet, plus one foot for each two feet of height by which a portion of a structure within 60 ft. of the rear lot line exceeds fourteen ft. in height.

g. Building height:

1) CH-1 = thirty-five feet.

2) CH-2 = twenty-six feet

h. Screening and landscaping:

1) Required pedestrian open spaces, parking lots, front yards and side yards to be completely landscaped, as approved by the Planning Commission.

2) All outdoor trash and storage areas to be completely screened by landscaping and/or walls, as approved by the Planning Commission.

i. Parking:

1) Pedestrian access to parking should be via walkways, arcades or similar means, or, in the case of direct abutment onto private or public parking facilities, via building entries.

2) For private parking facility locations, access should be to the rear of the building, with no visibility or minimal visibility from Big Basin Way, no vehicular ingress or egress from Big Basin Way, and separation from Big Basin Way by retail commercial space.

5. Historic Preservation

The City shall consider ways in which the zoning regulations can be accommodated to the special needs of designated historical resources. The proposed Commercial Historic district could incorporate a reduction in the required open space and pedestrian space for new developments that incorporate and preserve landmark structures. Such requirements could be reduced up to fifty percent (50%), with the stipulation that the full requirement would apply at any time the historic structure is removed, whether through moving, fire, or other cause.